

REVIEWS OF BOOKS.

A TEXT-BOOK OF PRACTICAL THERAPEUTICS, With Especial Reference to the Application of Remedial Measures to Disease, and Their Employment upon a Rational Basis. By HOBART AMORY HARE, M.D. Philadelphia: Lea Brothers & Co., 1890.

This contribution to the literature of therapeutics is the work of one well known as a scientific investigator and practical authority. There are not lacking many and good books in this department, but it does not follow that there is no field for further publication, even if we set aside the consideration of the accumulating fruit of observation and experiment, or the right to a hearing on the part of so well equipped an author. There is much to be gained by rearrangement of knowledge already in possession, both for the purpose of co-ordinating and correlating the parts of such knowledge, and of getting the most useful mental perspective. This consideration seems especially applicable in the field of therapeutics, where the amount of material is so great, and its source and value so diverse. In no other department do we have so intimate a blending of the rational and empirical. Nowhere else has the investigator been rewarded with such brilliant discoveries, the fruit of logical deduction, at one moment, only to stand the next baffled before some clinical fact as incontrovertible as it is inexplicable.

But the attitude of the modern scientific mind is one of scant tolerance of such a miscegenation, and there is almost a savor of ill-repute attaching to therapeutics of to-day, the expression "rubbishin" being recently flung at certain newly accredited drugs, by a surgeon of world-wide fame. The task of the latter-day therapist is to remove this opprobrium, and place the teaching and practice of therapeutics where it will command the respect of the most exacting. Empiricism has had

a long start in the race with rational methods, but its step is slow and its course all but finished, while the champions of the new order are fast gaining the day; and to publish their work is to aid in scientific progress.

It is in this consideration that we find the *raison d'être* of this work, the key-note of the author's aim appearing in these prefatory words: "The writer has endeavored to bring together in a readable form the combined results of laboratory and bedside experience, thinking the time ripe for such a task. * * * He desires to weave science and practice into so close a network that the foundations of experience may be cemented by the mortar of exact knowledge."

This book is divided into four parts. Part I is devoted to general therapeutic considerations, the author opening with a defence of medical therapeutics, and pointing the way between the Scylla of excessive doses and the Charybdis of nihilism.

Part II comprises "Drugs." These are taken up in the order of their English nomenclature, a plan to be commended, since drugs can not satisfactorily be grouped in one system, either from their physiological action or therapeutic application, while to class botanical drugs under such heads as "Thalamifloræ," or "Monocotyledones," is to invite at once amusement and despair. We notice with satisfaction the absence of pictures of medicinal plants, and of pharmaceutical directions, in a work of this nature. Huxley aptly characterizes the practical aspect of such things when he says: "It is all very well that the physician should know that castor oil comes from a plant, and castoreum from an animal, and how they are prepared; but for all the practical purposes of his profession that knowledge is not of one whit more value than the knowledge of how the steel of his scalpel is made."

The author's experience with Agaracin has been strangely negative in controlling night-sweats, and certainly does not accord with that of many observers, in whose hands it has often proved of benefit, in doses less than a tenth of that here suggested.

In speaking of aloes Dr. Hare says: "It is distinctly harmful if used constantly for any length of time, as it seems to produce atony of the bowel." This is in marked contrast with the teaching of most author-

ities, notably Lauder Brunton, who states that "aloës differs from other purgatives in not causing subsequent constipation, but, on the contrary, rendering the intestine more sensitive.

The question as to the comparative danger attending the use of chloroform or ether for anæsthesia is treated as might be expected from a collaborator of Wood, and a disciple of the extreme American school. Without going into detail the author states that chloroform kills by cardiac or respiratory arrest, or both,—in any form more readily than ether, and that with certain classical exceptions its use is unjustifiable when ether can be obtained. The practical directions for the administration of ether, and the prevention and treatment of untoward symptoms arising during its use, are concise, but adequate, and not altogether second-hand.

The section on drugs is good, without possessing superlative excellence; its merits lying rather more in arrangement and judicious elimination than in actual contents. The new drugs, good, bad and indifferent, are handled with discrimination. Among minor criticisms of particular drugs may be mentioned the absence of allusion to the surgical uses of Naphthalin; or the diuretic properties of sugar of milk, the scant reference to the value of morphine as a heart supporter, especially in cases of shock; and the dosage of potassium iodide, which is small, and often inadequate. There are numerous cross references to other parts of the work, adding to its usefulness.

Part III deals with "remedial measures other than drugs, and foods for the sick." Cold and heat are the main subjects here treated, and these are discussed at some length. The author is an enthusiastic advocate of the use of cold as an antipyretic in sthenic fevers. The article on Antiseptics is elementary, but properly so, if indeed it is at all called for in a purely medical work.

Part IV is devoted to diseases, and is by far the most valuable section of the book. The opening subject is Abortion, and later the author treats of the diseases of the Puerperium. These are well handled but it may be questioned whether they are not as well left to the department of midwifery, especially since in the view of the author such a subject as electricity has no place in his work. All the more

important diseases are taken up, and some of less moment. Epilepsy is exhaustively treated. The article on Fever is especially good, from a practical, literary and scientific point of view. The author considers that "we have only three measures for the relief of fever which are reliable, and have stood the test of time," viz., "antipyrin, acetanilid and the use of cold;" not greatly valuing phenacetin as an antipyretic; and, indeed, he is cautious in his endorsement of any drug intended to lower temperature. His criticism of the conclusions drawn by Naunyn from his experiments on rabbits subjected to prolonged pyrexia is exceedingly well directed. No attention is called to the fact that in the presence of a high temperature several doses of an antipyretic at reasonable intervals often produce no effect, until finally an apparently cumulative influence develops, and the patient's temperature very suddenly drops many degrees in an alarming manner.

Under Peritonitis, the relative merits of the use of opium, and of the salines are set forth at some length, the author apparently wishing both forms of treatment well, and finding appropriate cases for the use of each, though not advocating their combination.

The articles on Pneumonia and Rheumatism are to be commended, especially the latter, the necessity of larger doses of the salicylates than are usually given being emphasized.

The book ends with an index of drugs and remedial measures, and another of diseases and remedies, of considerable value.

A search for the reasons of things characterizes this work, although the author frankly admits all well established clinical facts. He is enthusiastic for a finally complete rational basis for therapeutics, and is himself a fruitful worker in that direction. The American profession justly consider their therapeutic standard an elevated one; and it is by such works as this that the position already occupied is adequately maintained.

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